

Your Honor,

Time flies, it has been two years since my first appearance in your court. Now I'm sitting in a corner at MDC Brooklyn writing this letter to you. The tender morning sun across the grides of iron wall shining upon the floor render a couple of light strips. Even the life in the prison can be poetic. This is the first time or maybe the only chance that I can communicate with you as a normal person. I'd like to introduce myself through this letter. Hope you would have interest about the story of my family and my life.

Two years ago, I was a typical Chinese young wage earner in Wuhan. At 8:00 am, my intelligent assistant sound (A smart house product from a Chinese hi-tech brand, named as Student XiaoAi) started to sing and talk, "Get up, get up, little fairy, it's time to go to work, la-la-la..." (I set my name as little fairy in her system). At the same time, my bed, which was also connected to the smart house system, automatically lifted me up. This is a regular fashion how I interact with furnitures in our apartment. 8:40 am, "Little fairy, it's time to depart!" After hearing this voice reminder from Student XiaoAi, my mom, who was busy in the kitchen could see me rush out from room, grab the lunch-box on the table, like a flash with a verbal message remaining in the air, "Thank you, mom, I have to go, see you in the evening! Luce, Chouchou, bye!" Luce and Chouchou

are our pet family members, they always lie on the floor in front of the gate, see me off and welcome me back like my loyalest bodyguards. Now Chouchou is going to be 13 years old. I brought her home one year before I went to Italy. The cuteness of this puppy had turned my mom from no-pet-lism to an irretrievable spoil-pet-lism. Luce is a 7 years old Welsh Corgi, I bought him from a farmer in Milan. Unfortunately, we were separated in two countries during the pandemic. My friend in Genoa had helped me to take care of him in that period. In July 2022, when the global shadow of pandemic gradually faded away, I finally found a pet-transport-agent to fetch him back to reside with us. He turned into the apple of my dad's eyes at first second when we saw him staying in the cage at the station waiting us to pick.

The commute from home to my office building took only 15 minutes by riding a city-bike. No need to suffer from the traffic jam was the main factor for me to consider a job offer back in Wuhan. From 9am to 5:30pm, I spent my time in the company. The environment was good — with snack bars and gorgeous lake view from our office window. The atmosphere in the office was relatively free and relaxed. My boss, Mr. Xia, is a creative person. Some of his words are still echoing in my ears — "Do you know Open AI? It's a completely path-breaking icon!", "Try to use the AI product to design a logo for such company in the battery industry."

AI has infinite possibilities, you should pay a close attention on it." Despite some of his thoughts were nearly pie in the sky, I enjoyed a lot with my job that I could stay in the forefront of the hi-tech field absorbing fresh ideas to extend the impact on other aspects of our life. It's very cool. Another thing that made me feel so cool was, I was working remotely on my second job to help my best friend with their start up fashion company. My previous work experience in Italy was a valuable resource to establish business relationships with fashion brands and distributors in Italy and Europe. I met this friend in Italy, we were classmates and intimate travel buddy. It was precious for me that we could keep our friendship by working together for a same career regardless we had settle down in different cities. From Monday to Friday, my daily life was highly repeated. two-point-one-line between home and office was my movement track. After the work, I went to take a walk with puppies. (I was in charge of the evening turn, my dad got the morning turn, my mom took care of our meals). Generally at 7pm, we enjoy the dinner together. My mom's cooking skill is what I miss the most.

We had a lot of fun staying at home and accompanying with each other. I like play puzzles, Lego, and reading. I was enthusiastic with upgrading Lego toy-cars by installing an engine and control system, and driving them running around with a remote. Luce and Chouchou were so excited chasing

behind the moving toy-cars. Along with a string of barks was the roar with laughter from my parents. My mom started to take piano class at Senior University after she retired. Every night after the dinner, she practiced the new content from the class with the piano that we have in our study room. Two puppies were her little fans. They bended over in the couch, stay quietly with standing ears but eyes were half opening. I'm not sure if they were reveling in the music or just getting bored. These peaceful life pieces are the origin of the happiness which are empowering me to face current challenges with a positive attitude.

The relationship between me and my dad is like sport buddy and fellow traveller. Sometimes we spend one day cycle around the East Lake with dogs in our backpack. During the midsummer, we often go swimming with dogs in this lake. East Lake is the biggest natural scenic spot in my city, it's a national wetland park. When we have to stay in the city for work, this is our most frequent whereabouts to be close to the nature. Both of us are so much fond of travelling. We drive to Hainan island every year to celebrate Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) since 2021. Hainan province is a tropical island located in the very southern part of China. We stay there for couple of weeks enjoy the warm climate while in Wuhan it is very cold during the winter. I go diving and surfing, my dad goes snorkelling, my mom and her sister have fun in a hot spring pool while our dogs

go swimming and play around.

We four had set up a solid travel team for several years. I even named us as Red Sunset Touring group. A long time ago, I made a wish on my bachelor graduation day that I want to travel around the world. Then I went to Italy for further study. Sitting in the classroom raise my head, I was totally astonished by the ceiling. It is fully covered by midcentury paintings! A strong thought had been emerged in my mind — It would be a great pity if I couldn't share with my family such a beautiful world that I'm experiencing now. So when I was capable enough to deal with most matters in Italian, I started to invite my parent to visit me. From then on, our family travel group — Red Sunset — was formally founded. During the 3 visits within 6 years, we had travelled to numerous European countries and Italian cities from North to South. Everytime before my Red Sunset group came, I would arrange and prepare well all the spot route, reservations and travel schedule in advance. I want to contribute the most beautiful memories to my family. Because they tried their best to support me for pursuing a colorful and fulfilling life. My vision was widened by such a distinctive new world. But it is meaningful only if I can share with my family. We had experienced extremely illusory and fantastic vistas in Iceland, crazy speed race on the motorway in Germany, trembling boat dwelling on the sea in Denmark and tranquil village life in

Austria. We had seen dancing aurora and meteor rain together, we had watched whales navigating freely in the sea with dolphins following us at one side of our boat. When we start to observe this world, we just find that it is so vast and varied. Different country has different culture, different structure, even different everything. We assume such country should be displayed in this way, but when we arrive there, so many unexpected things just emerge to remind us that there is so much we don't know that we don't know.

I thought I could reside in Italy for a long time or may have a family there. But the wheel of destiny just carried me back to stay with my family in China. The round-trip ticket between Rome and Wuhan I bought in November, 2019 had never been completed the return way check due to Covid-19. This unpredictable disaster had totally changed my life track. I was like an ant being swirled into the storm eye. The whole city was terribly quiet and covered by a heavy atmosphere that I had never experienced before. We were imposed to stay at home for almost 6 months. At that moment we didn't know when it would be the end. Now I think I was lucky that I had been sent to accompany my parents by some kind of unexplainable power. Because during that period, everything could be only accomplished online. I can't imagine that without me at home how could they get the materials for survival as they don't know how to deal with the digital stuff.

Also, Chouchou needed to take a walk twice a day at downstairs. I couldn't risk my parents to be exposed in the public space. At their age, with the disease they already had, they were too vulnerable to the virus. I'm glad that I was there and able to take care of them. In that horrible storm, we survived.

In following two years during the pandemic I was gradually persuaded by my parents for not going back to Italy. I think they were right. They told me that they are aging more and more rapidly. I should develop a family nearby them. Because I'm the only child, their needs are always my first priority. For them, a stable ordinary life is the best support from me to help them have a happy senior life. I tried, but it seems like the wheel of destiny has another arrangement for me, or maybe also for them.

I could never imagine that the reason I come to America not because neither tour nor study. A 5 days business trip as an interpreter in Fiji had been turned into more than 2 years incarceration in United States. I still remember the first call I made from Hawaii prison to my mom, I tried my best to comfort her, "Hey, mom, it's me. Listen, I'm still alive and I'm safe right now. I'm at the prison of Hawaii. American police took me from Fiji to here." When she heard this news she was too panicky to keep standing. After she found a chair to sit and smoothed the breath, I continued this most diffi-

cutt dialogue I've ever had in my life, "I'm ok mom! This jail has two Chinese people, they treat me good and help me a lot, you don't need to worry about my safety. Promise me, you must take care of yourself, remain yourself in a good mood. It's very important to your health. So far, I don't know what I can do, but I will definitely keep myself in a healthy status, both mental and physical. In these two years, they barely show me their difficulties, me neither. But we all know that each of us has been through a lot. Our family is like a small boat floating on the sea, when the storm comes, unity is the only way to survive.

Recalling the life in custody in these two years in MDC. A lot of first-time experiences spring into my mind. I've seen a lot and suffered a lot. When the hundred sentenced inmates came, I was forced to move to the top bed, slept under the bright light, I was lost — where is my original peaceful life? Who am I? Where it is? Why am I here? Who are they? With all these thoughts circled in my mind, I was wondering whether my family is missing me at this moment on the other side of the earth. In this place, I saw people fight, people smoke, people move like zombies.

It is the worst time in my living memory, but also the best. If you want to focus on improving your innerself, officers are really happy to offer multiple resources. So far, I have obtained more than 30 certificates from Education and

Recreation departments. I have collected a bunch of precious memories in this facility. Writing about the life of these two years, I want to express my gratitude more than other emotions.

Thanks to Ms. Simon from Recreation department and the volunteers from NY Public Theater. Last year, we dedicated the first Hip-hop and Shakespeare show in MDC. Me and other two female inmates performed our own poems in front of all other inmates, officers from different departments including Warden, and managers from Public Theater. At the end of the show, all of them were excited and stood up to applaud, some of them were even moved to tears. The positive energy in the darkness is extremely dazzling.

Thanks to Mr. Greco from Education department. He has introduced the Columbia University's classes into our unit that every year professors can teach us courses in person. I'm so grateful that I can still receive high quality education in this restrained environment. I've finished three classes which have credits in both MDC and Columbia University — American music history, Shakespeare's drama "Tempest", and Plato's "Republic". From these classes, I have not only absorbed spiritual nutrition but also enjoyed the process of communicating with professors about various topics. Their opening mind has impressed me and inspired me a lot about how to observe myself and this world. We

learned several typical music genres that had been successively formed along with the American history. We performed the *Tempest* in Shakespeare's language. My role was Miranda (The princess of Milan). Since we had rehearsed too many times before the show, those classical words and tone were carved into my linguistic system — casually jumping out of my mouth in daily conversation. In the class of philosophy, the professor led us to contemplate and discuss a bunch of brainstorming questions, such as what is the justice, what is the real happiness, does being just can make people happier, etc. From these classes, I learned how to write an efficient essay and sharpened my English expression. The best thing is, I'm getting very close to a culture that I was unfamiliar with before.

Same as my curiosity about a distinct culture, the girls in the unit asked me to teach them Chinese last year. I thought it's an exciting idea that they can gradually understand my culture, and our behavior patterns by learning our language. So I started to ask the permission and seek the material support from Education department for formally opening a Chinese class in the unit. That is, when we complete the class, both students and me can get BoP credits. Thanks to the Mr. Delgado, he patiently guided me for preparing documents for the approval and gently bought a HSK course book and work book (HSK is an

official exam for Chinese as second language learners, equal to American ESL) for us as reference. I totally designed 18 lessons for the class which would be presented in three parts during 9 weeks. When I began the class in May, the weekends has become my busiest days, except teaching Chinese from 2pm to 3pm. I'm also working in the kitchen on weekends.

From Monday to Friday, if I don't have any class to attend, I go to another unit to play puzzle or read books. Ms. Vincent from legal department treats us as her children. When she is here, she opens this empty area, offers multiple recreational materials for whom prefer stay quietly. Now this place is completely like an art gallery. Our drawing compositions, finished puzzles, crochet stuff animals are used to decorate hall way, offices and units.

I really enjoy the life style and living rhythm I have established and preserved in this unstable and complicated environment. I desire I could devote my positive energy to surroundings. It makes me feel I'm not very far away from my original life. Although when I miss my family, I can only look at the picture. I see my dad took foto with Luce and Chouchou sitting in the baby stroller laughing like three kids. I feel funny but also sad, I'm disappeared from my parents' life when they need me. At the age of 60s, it could be the harvest season of their life, but

they have to help me to take care of my dogs instead of playing with grandchildren and enjoying their life.

They are not only my parents, my travel fellows, but also my spiritual buddy. Philosophical discussions often take place among us. Multiple macroscopic topics such as — where do we go after death, what kind of life is a meaningful life, how should we attach ourselves to the nature and human societies — have been talked about several times in my family. When I think about them, I always ask myself what I can do to improve the quality of senior life. My generation was borned under the Unique Child Policy era, every young couple has 4 senior people to take care. Opposite to our situation, when our parents have to take care of their parents, they have siblings to share the responsibility. The population structure has been changed in decades. The biggest generation is entering the next half of life. This generation had went through the Cultural Revolution and witnessed the economic development at a warp speed. The willing of pursuing a high quality senior life is enhanced by their widened sight. How to overcome the huge gap of the population between two generations to help them to have a happier life is a general social issue we are going to face in the very near future. I started this research at 10 years age. The topic of the dissertation I did in Italy was — *Problemi e prospettive per l'assistenza agli anziani*.

e confronto con i modelli occidentali di eldercare (Problems and prospects for assisting senior people in China, Compare to the models of eldercare in Western countries). I always pay close attention on new technologies and national policies in the eldercare industry. Hope one day I can dedicate my passion and knowledge to this career.

On December 14th, 2023, Ms Matey from Education department applied a plant cultivating class. Every participant can transplant a branch of plants and bring back to the unit to take care. Coincidentally, that day was also my mom's birthday, and my birthday was the next day. In the class, teachers advised us to write our wishes on a small piece of paper and hide it in the middle of soil like seed a hope for the future. I wished that, "please let me reunite with my family as soon as possible and please let the world stays in peace". Two years has passed most of participants are not here anymore. They asked me to take care of their plants when they left. So now, I'm looking after seven green hopes at my peaceful corner in the unit. I feel pleased because there's a quote in an aphorism book (I Really Needed This Today, Hoda Kotb) that I really like — Choose hope, hope paves the way for the pure happiness.

At the end of the letter, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my lawyer team. Stay lonely on this completely

Strange territory facing this desperate situation. I feel like I'm being pushed to the cliff with toes stepping out of the edge, any slight airflow can drop me into the abyss. Fortunately, it is this team I've met. Their loving compassion and selfless kindness has comforted me countless times in these two years. It's very hard to use any language to display how lucky I feel that I have encountered these lovely people. They treat me as their daughter. I hope I can do something for them in the future.

Dear judge, this is the story of my family and my life. Thank you so much for taking time to read my letter. Wish you and your family all the best.